

Brandy and Mr. Whiskers

(animation bible)

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(Rio de Janeiro)- A Rio bound Delta flight made an emergency landing in Sao Paulo when a cargo door accidentally opened at 35,000 feet. An airline spokesman said there were no injuries, although several pieces of luggage, a pet carrier and a smelly burlap bag were lost. The airline refused to release any further details because they just don't care that much. (Reuters)

Table of Contents

- i. The premise
- ii. The set up
- iii. The main guys
- iv. Their relationship
- v. Their new world
- vi. Their new home
- vii. Their new friends
- viii. Their new enemies
- ix. What this series is really about
- x. Production elements

i. The Premise

A “buddy” comedy featuring a smart, pampered dog (think a fourteen year-old Reese Witherspoon) from a well-to-do Florida human family, who gets stranded in the Amazon jungle with a twisted rabbit (think an eight year-old hygiene challenged boy), who has spent his recent past in a zoo, employed at a dog track, and in a suburban home with six boys.

Like those classic comedic duos: Abbot and Costello, Laverne and Shirley, and Bush and Cheney, **Brandy and Mr. Whiskers** fill up the world with their personalities and contrasting views of life. Like Brandy’s desire to get the hell out of the jungle...A.S.A.P.; while Mr. Whiskers wants to start a jungle beautification program. Think of it as “Milo and Otis” on cough medicine. Or the “Incredible Twisted Journey”. Or “Gilligan’s Island” meets “Indiana Jones”.

It’s about a character who loves adventure (Mr. Whiskers) and one who prefers watching it on her family’s 40 inch plasma TV. It’s about a slightly materialistic teenage girl who is intrigued by nature’s wealth (Brandy) and a rather simple rabbit whose intrigue is limited to what rocks taste good.

But this is also a series about ‘siblings’...the universal emotion of having an older brother or sister. Or conversely-- a younger sibling. For Brandy, it’s about having a really obnoxious younger “brother” who constantly screws things up. But in a pumped up, life could be ending way. It’s one thing for your younger sibling to screw around in the den, but quite another when a hungry puma is charging. And for Mr. Whiskers, it’s about having an older “sister” who never really wants to have fun (fun being defined by Whiskers as seeing what the inside of a boa looks like).

It is a loud, physically silly character comedy series set in one of the most diverse and fascinating environments on Earth – the Amazon rainforest.

ii. The Set Up

A Rio bound 747 streaks across the sky as the pilot announces the mighty Amazon jungle lies below. Suddenly, another voice is heard...louder, certainly more demonstrative and slightly affected: “Like...hello? Is this how you treat a frequent flyer??!!”

The voice belongs to **Brandy Harrington**. A dog. Just don’t call her that. She is travelling with her human family to a Five-star spa for vacation. Not that her everyday life isn’t much different. Use to first class accommodations and pashmina comforters, this is a dog that has been living large. Unfortunately for her, a mix-up has Brandy spending the trip in the cargo hold (luckily in her air conditioned, chenille lined carrier) but sans prosciutto and Fuji bottled water, with the luggage and...

The hip-hop chanting **Mr. Whiskers**. He is traveling in a smelly dirty burlap duffel bag with flies buzzing around it. Mr. Whiskers is a happy go lucky (read: unhinged) rabbit who sports an orange jump suit. At this moment, he’s very excited about going to summer camp. That is, until Brandy informs him, that his ‘camp brochure’ is actually a bill of sale. He was sold to a zoo in Paraguay for thirty-nine cents.

Trying to give some reading light to his new first ever friend, the bone-headed bunny accidentally pulls the cargo door lever, sending himself, a screaming Brandy, and a whole lot of luggage careening towards the jungle floor...and their new home.

iii. Who are these two?

Brandy

A quintessentially smart, slightly bossy tween girl from an upper middle-class background. Her bossiness is rounded off by a nice self-effacing quality, as she realizes her tendency to be 'over-bearing'. Although, that doesn't stop her from trying to push her agenda. Brandy's also quite insecure, even though from outward appearances she looks like she has it all together. No matter what talents and abilities she has, Brandy still has that adolescent girl attitude of feeling she doesn't quite measure up.

She sets high standards for herself and expects her addled sidekick to meet those too. She is tough on others, but even tougher on herself. Inquisitive and resourceful, Brandy wants to get the heck home, but in the meantime is going to make the jungle fit her definition of 'civilization'. After all, this is the place where a lot of cosmetic's originate.

Brandy loved her lifestyle before 'moving' to the rainforest. She is pampered, pretty spoiled, and knows all the finest in the human world. This is a dog that vacationed in the Caribbean, and sports her own monogrammed Tiffany water and food bowls.

But don't confuse this with snotty. Although she can, on occasion, be that. She just expects to be treated well and to the finer things in life and has a tough time adjusting to her new existence. After all, this is a place where a mud bath is really a mud bath.

Mr. Whiskers

A happy-go-lucky optimistic bunny who is free from his past and wants to explore nature, meet other animals and sing loudly in the jungle. To him, he is playing in one big sandbox -- and has no reason or wish to return to 'civilization'. He's basically along for the ride and loves it.

A good part of that is because Mr. Whisker's checkered past is never far from his cerebellum—or what's left of it. His years in a suburban family home with six mischievous boys (occasionally seen in flashbacks) and 'tours of duty' in zoo's, dog tracks, pet stores and even a cosmetic testing lab have left our friend...shall we say, a bit odd. He is a pig, loves to smell his feet, can't stop picking his nose and has an endless assortment of stuff hidden in his overalls.

He is a true lover of life. He is out-going to the point of suicidal -- wanting to befriend piranhas and jungle spiders. Sometimes with near disastrous results. It's also a good thing he has an unnatural threshold of pain. But he's not all screwed up: Mr. Whiskers is also helpful, kind and gullible to the point of "do you believe this guy?"

At his core, Whiskers is a well-meaning eight year-old boy: kinda goofy, big on juvenile humor, fun loving and hard not to love. He's willing to try anything and always acts before he thinks. His nose is always twitching; he can smell (particularly farts) miles away. Mr. Whiskers loves music of all types, loves to dance, and is intolerant of overly serious behavior. Partly as a defense mechanism, he has become quite the class clown (in a class of two) and is always looking for a gag, practical joke, or humorous aside to keep him laughing and to try and get Brandy to laugh...

Mr. Whiskers does have some traits that come in handy in the wild. He's a sponge of information and has nearly a photographic memory. This comes in handy when you're walking around the jungle in circles for hours. Besides the aforementioned olfactory talents, he also has a keen sense of hearing (although his comprehension is shaky).

His optimism and ebullience are also contagious. So is his impetigo, but we won't go into that now. Because of his rather strange past, we will see his past through 'flashbacks'. Some show Mr. Whiskers at the zoo, or in his burrow. Some have no relation to anything in his life. Like the time, they were on the verge of dying, and his life flashed before him...only it wasn't his life.

iv. Their relationship

Theirs is the classic big sister/younger brother dynamic with a few odd twists. The first being: they're not actually related. Although it seems like Brandy runs the relationship, the truth is that it's much more complex (and bizarre) than that. In the jaws of potential death (literally), it is not uncommon for Whiskers to show nerves of steel and resolve.

As tough and resourceful as Brandy is, she still hasn't been on her own (outside of the aromatherapy tank) like Whiskers has. She is smart and resourceful, but has not been battle tested in real-life situations. Whiskers, on the other hand, is ready for anything. With the consequences either not considered, or understood.

But Brandy is the one that keeps our duo on track. When they are on a mission to find the Golden Toucan (who apparently has a key to getting out of this 'giant mud hole', Whiskers detours into how much he loves Golden sunsets over the Golden Gate Bridge with his pet dog - a golden retriever. Brandy's patented response is in keeping with the classic sibling reaction: hit him with something. But that's okay, because one of Mr. Whisker's other 'gifts' is that he has an unusually high threshold of pain. Piranhas tickle him.

Brandy will never admit it, but she does find Whisker's nuttiness fun. That's when he hasn't done something to get them killed. She knows she's supposed to get mad at him, but sometimes can't help but laugh and appreciate his sense of humor, naivete and love of life.

Mr. Whiskers, on the other hand, is constantly trying to get the more serious, driven Brandy to loosen up. Or in his words: "Let your tail ball down and boogie!" But Whiskers also has the uncanny ability to get Brandy really mad. Like when she is trying to get to a certain spot by sunset, and Mr. Whiskers has decided to teach himself vine swinging, and catapults himself off a cliff.

Being both new to the jungle (heck, Brandy's nearest contact with the jungle is a visit to the local mall's Rainforest Café), they do have to rely on (or be challenged by) some of the "locals"...

v. Their New World

The Amazon. Dark. Mysterious. Life giving. And pretty darn big, too. Brandy wants to know why the place is so dirty. The Amazon rainforest has a strong pull on us all. Without getting too philosophical or metaphysical about it, the Amazon is at the nexus of what man's relationship is to his environment. It remains with the undersea world, our closest link to our beginnings on this Earth. And more importantly, you don't need a tank or goggles to get around.

Amazonia is the largest tropical rainforest in the world. The river is the largest of the world's rivers in terms of volume of water. The main river is some 4,080 miles long, second only to the Nile in length. It is thought that over half of all plant and animal species call the tropical rainforest their home. Yet only a tiny percentage of Amazonia's millions of species of plants and animals are known to science, but those few that have been studied have already yielded valuable foods, medicines, and commercial products.

Obviously, it's a world of tremendous interest to kids and adults. And a pretty flippy new home for a pooch that used to spend her days strolling around the Boca Galleria. On a more 'practical' level, for this duo it's also a place where:

Nothing good happens in the water

When things go really quiet...watch out.

Quick sand actually exists

You **are** being watched

Humidity will curl your hair (and tail)

There's a reason they call it a 'jungle'

Domino's will not deliver

When a boa hugs you, it's not because he loves you.

vi. Their New Home

Essentially, a makeshift "tree house" made out of the stuff that fell out of the airplane. They have constructed a suburban archeologist's camp. It is a cool place that kids (and immature adults) would love to hang out in.

Brandy has the craftiness (and fashion sense) to construct bunk beds out of a large bikini. The roof is a raft. Golf clubs serve as the support structure. Human stuff is used in ways not originally intended. Like brassieres that serve as rain catchers, or Mr. Whiskers use of a child's 'water wings' as a neck brace, which nearly suffocates him. It's a fun, cozy playroom filled with suburban archeology.

vii. Their new friends

Lola Boa

A conflicted snake with self-esteem issues dealing with the fact that she has no arms or legs. Of 'Latino' descent, she is kind, loyal to a fault but can be cranky (particularly to Whiskers). She is one of Brandy's best new friends. Lola has a way of cutting through the crap...seeing the forest through the trees, literally.

Although she mostly is a voice of reason, she is not beyond flipping out when things get a little wild. She tends not to react well to pressure or trouble, and she will literally wrap herself in knots if things aren't going well.

Ed

Ed is a toothy river otter, who functions much better in the water than on land. Slippery and awkward out of water, he is smooth as silk in the water. He is Whiskers best male friend...a folksy, simple guy who enjoys Whiskers' manic nuttiness (one of a select few). He likes to hang with Whiskers and usually has no qualms about joining his bunny pal on one of his many 'hare' brained schemes.

Ed is both amazed and intimidated by Brandy and the force of her personality. For her part, she doesn't pay much attention to him, but is secretly relieved that there is someone here who doesn't mind spending time with Whiskers.

Meryl and Cheryl

Twin toucan sisters who constantly bicker and fight. They can't agree on anything (even if they are truly twins). Almost all of their arguments end in a physical tussle that sends them tumbling off screen. They are loud, opinionated and sassy and not afraid to say what they think. Particularly to each other.

They are impressed with Brandy's knowledge, although don't always feel it is relevant to their lives here (like fashion). Meryl and Cheryl are generally patient with Whiskers, although are quick to make cracks about his mental state and maturity level.

Margo

Margo is a slightly caustic, stuck up...uhh, stick bug. Part of the cool crowd, she often times feels she is slumming with Brandy, Lola and the toucan sisters. She is a bit jaded, sophisticated (for being a two inch high insect in the jungle) and wise, but still looks up to Brandy...a species she has never seen before. Margo can make Brandy look like a saint. Which isn't easy.

viii. Their enemies (besides themselves, that is)

Gaspar Le Gecko

The self-anointed dictator/musical director and social czar of the jungle. Tiny, green and sporting an accent that rests somewhere between Paris, Lisbon and Ecuador, this egotistical tongue-wagging lizard is Donald Trump with a better

hairdo. He is sneaky and slippery, preferring to climb walls and caves than stand upright and is autocratic with his monkey henchmen who do a lot of his bidding. His total hegemony is threatened by Brandy...the only one willing to stand up to him.

Lions, Tigers and tapirs oh my

Literally a menagerie of 'villains' that populate our world. From **Lester the Guerilla** (who makes Godzilla look like Matt Lauer), to **Vlad the misunderstood fruit bat**, to **Momma Croc**, a type-A mother crocodile with a bad temper and an appetite for Eco tourists, to the commander of the ant army, who is an eighth of an inch tall but has the ego of George Patton.

ix. What the show is about

Among the themes we'll explore (besides the obvious one of never opening the cargo door on an airplane), are the following:

- Friendship. We'll see how friendship is a mighty complicated thing, but well worth the effort. How life's ups and downs are much easier to deal with when you have a friend.

- Making the best out of a situation. Something particularly relevant to Brandy, who is used to having everything delivered on a silver platter (okay, silver-plated doggie bowl).

- Being open minded and appreciating others. Thrust into a completely different world, our duo must learn to accept their new neighbors and understand a 'civilization' foreign to their own.

-Effort and determination. Something Brandy is good at it. And Mr. Whiskers constantly marvels at. When he's not wondering why his tail smells like stewed figs. Brandy is a determined, some would say stubborn force of nature that sets her mind on something and achieves some sort of victory hell or high water. .

-Growing up. Being caught between being a kid and an adult, and having a sibling that you love and hate depending on what minute of the day it is. If you don't have siblings and you're in the television business, you probably love and hate yourself the same way. It's kinda like that.

And that's part of the fun of the series, that we can do emotionally rich stories in a heightened over the top world. You may hate your little brother's goofiness, but what if that 'goofiness' got you out of being boiled alive?

The show also taps into two other kid-relevant worlds. First, independence. Kids perpetually battle with the issue of wanting space. In this case, they're in their own jungle fantasy park. What could be cooler? Getting to explore, checking things out-- all without someone nagging you to do your homework. But it's more complicated than that. As Brandy reluctantly will admit: "I want to be on my own. Not alone." It's enough to bring tears to a bunny's eyes (which his own lack of hygiene does to him and others frequently anyway).

The other thematic area is exploring the world of nature and the environment. Every study done about this generation puts this topic at the top of their interests. We'll be exposing viewers to a world that hasn't been tapped into extensively. And one that is unique for its' beauty and magic.

x. Production elements

Each half-hour show will be comprised of two, eleven-minute stories. Designed with an eye towards the rich, vibrant colors of the rainforest, and introducing a cast of creatures unique and alien to most of us, the series will have a very stylized, individual look.

We'll also be using a melange (nice word, isn't it?) and maybe even a pastiche (another good one) of production styles and techniques. Like:

Footage/Photographs. Hard to believe but the Disney Company is letting us mine the archives of stock footage houses to use photo's and footage for gags and story punches. For instance, when Gaspar Le Gecko talks about his relatives in Florida...we'll go to a photo of leather shoes.

Flashbacks/fantasy/nightmares. We'll see Whisker's rather odd past. Like close-ups of him in a dirty hutch with four mischievous boys staring at him; and shots of Whiskers in his burrow with his mommy and daddy. Or fantasies of Brandy and what she believes her life should be like.